

239. Such was the course of descent by which torture came to the Middle Ages. It was in connection with the revival of the eleventh century that the Roman law of treason was made to apply to heresy by construing it as treason to God.¹ It is, however, of the first importance to notice that it was the masses which first applied death by burning to heretics. The mob lynched heretics long before the church began to persecute.² (See, further, sec. 253.)

240. Jewish and Christian universality. Who persecutes whom? The Jews held that their God was the only real God. The gods of other nations were "vanity," that is, nullity. They held that their religion was the only true one. When about the time of the birth of Christ they stepped before the Greco-Roman world with this claim, it cost them great hatred and abuse. In the history of religion it counts as a great fact of advance in religious conceptions. Christianity inherited the idea and applied it to itself. It has always claimed to be absolutely and alone true as a religious system. Every other religion is an invader of its domain. It was this attitude which gave a definition to heresy. Under paganism "speculation was untrammelled. The notion of there being any necessary guilt in erroneous opinion was unknown."³ When once this notion found acceptance it produced a great number of deductions and corollaries and gave form to a great number of customs, such as they had never had before. The effect on the selection of articles of faith out of the doctrines of warring sects and philosophies is obvious, also the effect on methods of controversy. The effects are important in the fourth and fifth centuries, and the notion became one of

the postulates of all thinking. This is the ultimate reason for the wickedness of heresy and for the abomination of all heretics. Certainly Christianity did not, in this matter, improve on the philosophy of paganism. It was this attitude of Christianity and its neglect of the existing political authority which drew upon it the contempt, derision, and hatred of the heathen. The persecution of Christians was popular. It expressed the popular feeling, which was more constantly expressed in the popular comedy and

¹ Lea, *Inquis.*) I, 421. ² *Ibid.*, 308. ⁸ Lecky, *Morals*•, II, 190.